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AUTHOR Dineva, Nedka
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ABSTRACT

A survey of "STW [School-to-Work] Partnership Effectiveness and Sustainability" was conducted as part of a larger evaluation of the entire STW efforts in West Virginia. The findings of the study, drawn from responses from 51 STW directors, 53 businesses, and 11 labor organizations, include the following: (1) the partnership concept is essential to achieving full and successful implementation of the STW initiative at the local level; (2) by their involvement in STW, employers are active in helping to develop a local work force development system; (3) the state and federal role is important to the future of STW implementation; (4) appropriate staffing is needed to provide critical activities, coordination, and communication with the partners involved; (5) the STW initiative is a very cost efficient method of providing career awareness, career exploration, and career preparation training activities; and (6) labor unions have made significant contributions to STW. Problems in STW include lack of understanding of the concept by the partnership members, lack of support from educators, lack of funding, lack of opportunities for work-based learning, and legal and transportation issues. Proposals for the future include promoting legislation to provide incentives to employers participating in STW, providing funding for personnel for STW, and increasing public knowledge about STW through a public information campaign. (KC)

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EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE LOCAL SCHOOL-TO-WORK PARTNERSHIPS

By
Nedka Dineva, HRDTI, Inc., WV

The School-to-Work / STW / Initiative was put into life by SB –300-Jobs Through the Education Act in 1996. The Act recommended a **partnership approach** as the main approach to implement the Initiative . This approach is designed to combine public and private resources to provide necessary education and training experiences for all students, and to allow them to achieve high academic standards and to be well prepared for the real world of work and life. Through this closer relationship with business, what schools teach becomes more relevant to what is needed in the current and future workplace.

West Virginia recognized the importance of this new approach to achieve long term success and to assure all West Virginians to have "core competencies, skills and personal qualities that enable them to learn and make a smooth career transition in response to technological innovation and market competitiveness" (Making Career Connections, WV STWOS, Implementation Grant, Revised Plan, 9/1/98).

Following the requirements and recommendations of the STW Opportunity Act of 1994, in West Virginia 52 local partnerships have been established "to assist in the development of a local STW implementation plan and provide the oversight and guidance in administering funds allocated" (Making Career Connections, WV STWOS, Implementation Grant, Revised Plan, 9/1/98).

As specified by the STW opportunity Act all these local partnerships include employers, employers organizations, representatives of the Local Boards of Education, local educational agencies, local educators, post-secondary educational institutions, labor organizations, local governmental agencies, community based organizations, and parent or parent organizations. It is encouraged in West Virginia that partnerships include legislative members, students, rehabilitation agencies, Chambers of Commerce, Tech Prep representatives, churches etc.

It was necessary to evaluate the developed WV STW Opportunity System potentials, effectiveness of the created local partnerships and their sustainability after the federal funding is terminated in 2001.

A special survey on "STW Partnership Effectiveness and Sustainability" was conducted as a part of the larger evaluation of the entire STW efforts in WV.

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The **purpose** of the survey was to research the current situation of the STW Initiative at local level and to develop proposals for future improvement and sustainability by determining the most important, effective and applicable activities of the Initiative, how these activities were organized and implemented locally, what is the real participation and contribution of the partners involved in them, and what more is necessary to be done to increase and sustain the Initiative.

The study has been focused on county STW Directors opinions and the business and labor participation in local partnerships to ascertain their real contribution to the implementation of school-to-work. The study was mainly directed to the private businesses. 51 STW Partnership Directors, 160 Businesses and 13 Labor Organizations were surveyed. Responses were received from all of the STW Partnership Directors, 53 businesses and 11 labor organizations involved.

MAIN FINDINGS

A / The partnership Concept is essential to achieving full and successful implementation of the STW Initiative at the local level.

- Business, Labor and other partners bring to education a better understanding of the real world of work
- Partners provide important input and advice on policy to Boards of Education
- Partners provide essential information and impetus to Career awareness activities for the students by providing guest speakers in the classroom, participating in career days and career fairs, and organizing workplace and industry tours.
- Partners provide valuable input into Curriculum Revision
- Exploratory work experience can only be provided by the partners.
- By combining efforts and resources partners make a real contribution to local educational development, as well as to workforce development in the area.

B/ By their involvement in STW, employers are active in helping to develop a local Workforce Development system

- Employers are active in providing leadership to involve Education and Labor in economic development in the area

- Work based learning opportunities have been increased and expanded
- Skill Standards have been developed for both academic and vocational or work - based learning
- Partners are more aware of the contribution they can make in improving the quality of education and therefore the quality of future employees.

C/ The State and Federal role is important to the future of STW implementation.

- State and federal Legislation have been essential to the creation of STW Initiative
- Federal Funding to support training activities, Transportation and Technical Assistance, and State Conferences has been key to the implementation of STW
- Legislation to provide workers compensation coverage for students engaged in observation or learning activities on employers premises will help to assure the sustainability of STW
- A state tax credit for employers providing on the job training organized through STW programs will further encourage employers participation

D/ Appropriate staffing is needed to provide critical activities , coordination, and communication with the partners involved.

- The leadership of a state STW Director and staff must be continued
- A county level coordinator on a full or part-time level is required
- Staff development activities for partners, educators, mentors, community , and Board members must be continued by state and county level STW staff.

E/ The STW Initiative is a very cost efficient method of providing career awareness, career exploration and career preparation training activities.

- There are very few additional cost to the school in providing STW activities
- Employers provide STW activities without cost to the school system
- Employers recognized the benefits to them of helping to develop a more skilled, knowledgeable workforce with good work ethic.

F/ Labor Unions have made significant contributions to STW

- Unions help to improve communications between schools and employers
- The major contribution of Unions is in assisting in the design and implementation of STW at the local county or school level
- Unions help employers to define skill requirements and assist in curriculum development
- Unions help promote STW
- Safety in the workplace is a major concern of unions.

MAJOR PROBLEMS

1. Lack of understanding of the concept by the partnership members. The general public is not aware of the Initiative and what it can do for the students.
2. Lack of support from educators. The teachers can not set theory apart from practice and some of them do not like STW activities.
3. Poor communication between school system and participating businesses.
4. Lack of enough funding and other resources including staff available to assist and coordinate implementation of the Initiative's activities (full-time coordinator and work-based experience coordinator)
5. Lack of substantial economic base and businesses in part of the counties which limits the opportunities for work-based learning.
6. Legal and Transportation issues.
7. Lack of interest by potential partners to STW activities.

PROPOSALS - NEXT STEPS

A/ Promote legislation to provide one or more of the following incentives employers participation in STW activities

- Inclusion of STW students who are participating in qualified STW activities on employers remises in workers compensation without cost to employers
- Tax incentives to help cover certain allowable costs (training, wages

paid and other direct costs)

- Special recognition to employers who participate in STW
- Financial support for rural areas to create work-based learning Opportunities

B/ Promote legislation to provide for personnel and other costs required to operate STW

- Create budget items to pay for state staff to promote and supervise STW
- Provide for local STW coordinator and staff to be included in the school aid formula
- Provide a special line item in the budget for transportation and other costs unique to STW

C/ Involve STW in the new Workforce Investment Act

- Seek recognition and support of STW by the Governors' Workforce Investment Office
- Make contacts with the seven regional workforce investment boards to promote STW as a major activity in the youth programs
- Request appointment of county STW coordinators to Youth council in each of the seven regions
- Seek funding for STW from each of the seven regional workforce boards

D/ Organize a public information campaign to increase public knowledge and support of STW

- Seek support and assistance from the Newspapers association and broadcasters association in developing the campaign
- Develop public service radio and TV spots
- Create a special STW week to present the best experience and Achievements
- Create a special awards for partners, schools, teachers, etc. who exhibit outstanding support or outstanding programs.